

PAUL GELLERT: Thanks a lot. My name is Paul Gellert, and I teach sociology at the University of Tennessee. I come here as a citizen of Knoxville and of the United States, not representing the university per se. I want to thank you also for the opportunity and I appreciate the people for taking their time, like myself, out of our busy days to consider a vital issue, which is the future of energy in America, the future of coal, the future of publically-owned lands, which I as a citizen, as the previous speaker pointed out, am part of. I really think that the PEIS would benefit by thinking about two things. One, not thinking short-term, thinking about the long-term, sort of the next generations. And, two, not thinking too narrowly. So, I think we have heard a lot about the externalities. I think that, you know, until a couple of weeks ago when I heard about this public session, I didn't realize that forty percent of our coal comes from public lands. And I think a lot of Americans would be surprised that the Bureau of Land Management, which provides an awful lot of public services and ecosystem services and however one wants to term it, is selling that for coal in a period in which climate change is so urgently needing to be addressed. And I urge us to sort of ignore the climate change denial industry, which a variety of sociologists and other social scientists have done some research to investigate how this denial machine has been working. I think we should view this as an opportunity to rethink coal leasing in a broader picture that includes the global picture. The companies that are going through bankruptcy are going to come out of that bankruptcy and perhaps continue mining coal, but they may be mining that coal in other parts of the world. I think the U.S. could be at the forefront instead of a transition to a clear energy picture with just a picture for our communities and ecosystems. I think we need to consider the risks of the bankruptcy and self-bonding issues. It poses a severe risk to reclamation efforts, and it may cost the U.S. taxpayer more than we gain through the leasing program. We need to consider the ecosystem risks at local, regional, and broader, even global, scales. And think we need to think about the distribution of costs and benefits. I think the figures that were introduced by the representatives of our congress people at the beginning threw out some figures without putting it into any sort of comparison. Yes, coal produces money, but what are the costs and what are the incommensurable non-monetizable costs of this production? As an academic and as a citizen, I urge the BLM to increase its transparency as well. Maybe this information is available, but it is not as readily available as I would like. And if it is not available, I urge you to make it available, things such as the location and amount over time of all of the leased coal. Even the BLM statements and the Secretary of Interior statement that mention over forty percent don't actually show us the location of this leased coal. What is the amount paid by the private sector in various places? What is the distribution and use of the money that is collected by the BLM? And I think finally that options must include consent of the public. I thank you for your time.